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AUTHORS: Muhammed Seyyit SEN

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## A Muslim Scholar and Diplomat in Baghdad at the Time of the Būyids: The Encounters of al-Bāqillānī within a Multi-Confessional Environment

### Büveyhîler Dönemi Bağdat'ında Yaşayan Sünnî Bir Âlim ve Diplomat: Bâkıllânî'nin Farklı İnanç Mensuplarıyla Etkileşimi

Muhammed Seyyit Şen<sup>1</sup> 



#### ABSTRACT

The late tenth century witnessed fundamental political and religious transformations in the Muslim world. After emerging as a Shī'ī Dynasty in Iran in the first half of the tenth century, the Būyids controlled Baghdad in 945 and began to dominate the Sunnī Abbāsīd Caliphate. In academia, it is generally believed that the Būyid Dynasty exclusively supported the Shī'ī faith and popularized Shī'ī practices while marginalizing and oppressing Sunnism in Iraq. Even though the Būyids were identified with Shī'ism, different confessional groups (Christians, Mu'tazilis, Shī'īs, and Sunnis) were well-represented in the Būyid court. In addition to encountering the Byzantines diplomatically and culturally, the Būyids were also engaged with Christianity. In my paper, through the life and works of a famous Sunnī theologian, al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), I examine how the Būyids interacted with different religious groups. I also analyze how they established more flexible and porous confessional boundaries rather than engaging in sectarianism and religious conflict.

**Keywords:** Medieval History, Būyids, Religious Encounters, Sunnism, Shī'ism

#### ÖZ

Onuncu yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren İslam dünyasında köklü siyasi ve dinî değişimler meydana gelmiştir. İran'da Şii kökenli bir hanedanlık kuran Büveyhîler Bağdat'ı 945 tarihinde kontrol ettikten sonra Abbâsî halifeliğine tahakküm etmeye başlamışlardır. Geleneksel tarih anlatısında Büveyhîlerin özellikle Irak'ta Şiiliği ön plana çıkardığı ve Sünnîlere baskı yaptığı şeklinde bir algı bulunmaktadır. Büveyhîler Şiilikle özdeşleştirilmişse de farklı din ve mezhep mensupları (Hristiyanlar, Mu'tezilîler, Şiîler ve Sünnîler) Büveyhî sarayında iyi bir şekilde temsil edilmiş ve kendi fikirlerini özgürce ifade etme imkânı bulmuşlardır. Yine Bizans İmparatorluğu ile olan diplomatik ve kültürel etkileşim sayesinde Büveyhîler, Hristiyanlığa dair mevzularla da yakından ilgilenme imkânına sahip olmuşlardır. Bu makalede, onuncu yüzyılın önemli Eş'arî âlimlerinden biri olan ve yaşamını Büveyhî hanedanlığı döneminde geçiren Bâkıllânî'nin (ö. 403/1013) hayatı ve eserleri üzerinde

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author/Sorumlu yazar:  
Muhammed Seyyit Şen (Dr. Öğr. Üyesi),  
Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi,  
Tarih Bölümü, Bursa, Türkiye  
E-mail: mssen@uludag.edu.tr  
ORCID: 0000-0003-2954-7360

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durulacak ve onun Būveyhî hanedanı ile olan olumlu münasebeti ortaya konacaktır. Böylelikle, Būveyhîler döneminde çoğunlukla mezhep ve din çatışmalarına şahit olmaktan ziyade daha esnek din ve mezhep sınırlarının ortaya çıktığı, değişik din ve mezhep grupları arasındaki farklılıkların müzakere edildiği vurgulanacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ortaçağ Tarihi, Būveyhîler, Dinî Etkileşim, Sünnilik, Şiîlik

## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Şiî kökenli Būveyhî hanedanının 945 yılında Irak bölgesini ele geçirip Abbâsîler üzerinde hâkimiyet kurması İslam tarihinde önemli bir dönüm noktası olarak kabul edilmektedir. Būveyhîlerin Şiîliği hâkim mezhep hâline getirerek Sünnî Müslümanları ötekileştirdiği ve Sünnî Abbâsî halifeliğini kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda manipüle ettiği anlatılmaktadır. Būveyhîler dönemi daha yakından incelendiğinde aslında durumun yukarıda bahsedilen hususlardan daha farklı olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu noktada dönemin önemli Sünnî âlimlerinden biri olan Bâkılânî'nin hayat hikayesine ve ilmi çalışmalarına bakmak önem arz etmektedir. Sünnî bir âlim olarak Bâkılânî Būveyhî hanedanına yoğun bir şekilde muhalefet etmekten ziyade Būveyhîler ile pozitif bir ilişki düzeyi geliştirmiş ve Sünnîlik adına önemli çalışmalarda bulunmuştur. Būveyhîlerden gelen davet üzerine öncelikle Şiraz'a gitmiş ve Būveyhî sarayındaki ilmi toplantılarda Sünnîliğin itikadî görüşlerini Mu'tezilî ve Şiî âlimlere karşı başarıyla savunmuştur. Bâkılânî toplantılardaki üstün başarısından dolayı Būveyhî Sultanı Adudüddavle'nin takdirini kazanmış ve sultanın oğlu Simnânüddavle'nin eğitilmesi görevini üstlenmiştir. Bâkılânî daha sonra sultanla beraber Bağdat'a gelmiş ve burada ilmi faaliyetlerine devam etmiştir. Bâkılânî'nin ilmi faaliyetleri sadece Bağdat ile sınırlı kalmamıştır, zira Būveyhî sultanı tarafından elçi olarak Bizans İmparatorluğu'na gönderilmiştir. İstanbul'daki elçilik görevi esnasında Bizans İmparatoru II. Basil ve İstanbul patriği ile İslam ve Hristiyanlık hakkında bazı teolojik tartışmalarda bulunmuş ve Bizanslılar tarafından onun ilmi yetkinliği ve tartışmalardaki üstün performansı takdir edilmiştir. Elçilik görevinden sonra Bağdat'a dönen Bâkılânî meşhur Mansûr Camii'nde İmam Eş'arî'nin kelam alanındaki *el-Lüma* 'adlı eserini okutmuştur. Ayrıca kendisi de Eş'arî kelamının önemli eserlerinden biri olarak kabul edilen *et-Temhîd*'i kaleme almış ve eserini Būveyhî sultanına ithaf etmiştir. Bâkılânî'nin öğretim hayatında ve kişisel çalışmalarında kelam ilmi üzerinde durması dönemin ilmi dünyasını anlamak bakımından önem arz etmektedir. Būveyhîler döneminde hem Şiîliği hem de Mu'tezilîliği temsil eden önemli âlimler yetişmiş ve kelam sahasında kayda değer eserler kaleme almışlardır. Dolayısıyla Bâkılânî de bu alana yönelmiş ve Sünnî kelam düşüncesini esaslı bir şekilde ortaya koymuştur. Örneğin meşhur Mu'tezilî âlim Kādî Abdülcebbar, Eş'arî'nin *el-Lüma* 'adlı eserine *Nakzî'l-Lüma* 'adlı bir reddiye yazınca Bâkılânî de onun eserine *Nakzu Nakzî'l-Lüma* 'adında karşı bir reddiye yazmıştır. Yine, *et-Temhîd* adlı eserinde imâmet konusuna temas etmiş ve Şiâ'nın görüşlerini açıkça tenkit ederken Sünnî görüşlerin haklılığını müdafaa etmiştir. Keza Şiîlerin Sünnî halifelere ve

bazı sahabeye karşı yapılan eleştirilerine cevap vermek adına *Menâkıbü 'l-e'imme ve nakzü 'l-metâ'in 'alâ Selefi 'l-ümme* adlı eserini kaleme almıştır. Benzer şekilde dönemin önemli Şii âlimlerinden Şeyh Müfid ile imâmet ve usûl konusunda yapmış olduğu münazaalardan sonra *el-Mesâil ve 'l-mücâlesâtü 'l-mensûre* isimli bir risale yazmış ve Şiiliği açıkça eleştirmiştir. Ayrıca o dönemde bazı Şii taraftarlarca dile getirilen mevcut Kur'ân'ın değiştirildiğine dair iddialara karşı *el-İntisâr li 'l-Kur'ân* veya *el-İntisâr li-sıhhati nakli 'l-Kur'ân ve 'r-red 'alâ men nehalehü 'l-fesâd bi-ziyâde ev nuksân* isminde bir eser yazmıştır. Yanı sıra Bâkılânî bu dönemde İsmâilî (Bâtınî) fikirlerle de mücadele içerisine girmiştir, zira 10. asrın ikinci yarısında Mısır'daki Şii Fâtımî hanedanı Irak'ta yoğun bir ilmî ve siyasi faaliyette bulunmuştur. Fâtımî davetçilerinin Irak'taki etkili faaliyetleri sonucunda bazı valiler cuma hutbelerini Fâtımî halifesi adına okutmaya başlamışlardır. Bu süreçte Bâkılânî Abbâsîlerle iş birliği içerisinde olmuş ve Sünnî Abbâsî halifesinin otoritesini artırmaya dönük birtakım faaliyetlerde bulunmuştur. Örneğin Bâkılânî İsmâilî fikirlerin batıl olduğunu ortaya koymak için *Keşfü 'l-esrâr fi 'r-red 'ale 'l-Bâtıniyye* adlı eserini yazmıştır. Yine Sünnî Abbâsî halifeliğinin meşruluğunu müdafaa etmek için *Nusretü 'l-Abbâs ve imâmeti benîh* (Abbâs Oğullarının İmâmetinin Savunulması) veya *İmâmetu Benî Abbâs* (Abbâs Oğullarının Liderliği) isimli eserini kaleme almıştır. Ayrıca Bâkılânî Abbâsîlerin siyasi pozisyonlarını güçlendirmek adına *el-İmâmetü 'l-kebîre* (Büyük İmâmet) ve *el-İmâmetü 's-sagîre* (Küçük İmâmet) isminde risaleler de meydana getirmiştir. Dolayısıyla Bâkılânî kendi zamanındaki sosyopolitik yapıyı çok iyi takip etmiş, Sünnî düşüncenin korunması ve yayılması adına önemli ilmî aktivitelerde bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak Bâkılânî'nin yaşamı ve eserleri Büveyhîler döneminde Şii tahakkümün bulunmasından ziyade farklı inanç mensuplarının kendisini güzel bir şekilde ifade edebildiğini ve birbirleriyle ilmi müzakerelerde bulunabildiklerini göstermektedir. Bâkılânî de Büveyhîlerin farklı ekollere mensup âlimlere karşı olan mütemayıl durumundan güzel bir şekilde istifade etmiş ve Sünniliği başarılı bir şekilde savunmuştur.

## Introduction

The period of the Būyids has typically been described in terms of sectarian politics and religious tensions since they were assumed to support the Shī'ī faith and patronize the Shī'ī community while disregarding the Sunnī population. For example, Heribert Busse talks about how the Shī'īs enjoyed Būyid patronage both politically and financially until the Seljuks' control of Baghdad in 1055.<sup>1</sup> Eric J. Hanne also mentions how the Shī'ī population in Baghdad became a dominant social group and how Shī'ī public practices such as the Karbala commemoration caused unrest with Sunnīs during the Būyid period.<sup>2</sup> In addition, John J. Donohue explains how the favor that Būyids showed toward Shī'ism instigated a sectarian divide between the Sunnīs and Shī'īs.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Tayeb el-Hibri points out how the Būyids pressured the Sunnī Abbāsid Caliphs and sponsored Shī'ī public ceremonies.<sup>4</sup>

However, in contrast to these typical views, the Būyid period provides more complex and multi-faceted religious dynamics because the Būyids engaged with various confessional groups in different ways. In my article, I argue that al-Bāqillānī's career as a Sunnī Muslim scholar exemplifies a significant case for the study of Būyid social and religious history, since he worked as a *qādi* in the Būyid State and participated in scholarly conventions in the Būyid Court encountering Christians in Byzantine Constantinople. Adopting a neutral position, he also played important roles in diplomatic dialogues between the Sunnīs and Shī'īs. His diverse religious and political activities show to what extent the Būyids had flexible religious boundaries rather than supporting factionalism and religious repression.

### 1. The Political Context of Iraq at the time of the Būyids

The Muslim world witnessed significant political transformations in the tenth century. The Abbāsid Caliphate lost its political authority while new dynasties emerged out of its heritage. Originating from the Daylam region in Iran, the Būyid Dynasty dominated Western Iran and Iraq in the first half of the tenth century. During the reign of Mu'izz al-Dawla (d. 356/967), the Būyids entered Baghdad and began to control the Sunnī Abbāsid Caliphate in 945. Among the Būyid leaders, 'Adud al-Dawla (d. 372/983) became the most influential Amir since he turned the Būyid State into one of the mightiest empires in the Middle East.<sup>5</sup>

After 'Adud al-Dawla died in 983, his three sons - Samsām al-Dawla (d. 388/998), Sharaf al-Dawla (d. 379/989), and Bahā al-Dawla (d. 403/1012) - embarked upon a bitter struggle for

1 Heribert Busse, *Chalif und Grosskönig: die Būyiden im Irak (945-1055)* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg In Kommission, 2004), 605.

2 Eric J. Hanne, *Putting the Caliph in His Place: Power, Authority, and the Late Abbāsid Caliphate* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 23-24.

3 John J. Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty in Iraq 334 H./945 to 403 H./1012: Shaping Institutions for the Future* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 315-316.

4 Tayeb el-Hibri, *The Abbāsid Caliphate – A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 180-181.

5 Claude Cahen, "Buwayhids or Būyids", *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Second Edition) (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 1/1350-1357.

the leadership of the Būyid Dynasty. Sharaf al-Dawla won the battle in 987 and began to rule the Būyid State, but he died soon after in 989, after which Bahā al-Dawla took his position. After settling down in Baghdad, Bahā al-Dawla attempted to consolidate his authority on the Abbāsīd Caliphate. He deposed the Abbāsīd Caliph, Tā'ī Lillāh (d. 393/1003), in 991 and appointed Qādir Billāh (d. 422/1031) as the new caliph in his place. At the same time, Bahā al-Dawla was engaged in struggles with his brother, Samsām al-Dawla. Once Samsām al-Dawla was killed near Isfahan in 998, Bahā al-Dawla was able to control the former's regions such as Kerman and Fars in Iran. Bahā al-Dawla further struggled with his uncle, Fakhr al-Dawla, who claimed the Būyid throne as well. When Fakhr al-Dawla died in 997 in Ray, his sons decided to obey Bahā al-Dawla's rule in 1009-1010, allowing the latter to become the sole authority of the Būyid Dynasty. Shortly after that, Bahā al-Dawla moved his capital from Baghdad to Shiraz. He died there in 1012 but was buried in Najaf. His death unfortunately brought instability and chaos to the Būyid Dynasty since his sons began to fight with each other to acquire the Būyid throne. Accordingly, even though the Būyids managed to control Iraq and Iran, they could not keep power and authority over those regions for a long time because of civil wars among the Būyid princes. Thus, the Būyids had to face an imminent threat which was rising from eastern Iran, namely the Sunnī Seljuk Dynasty. The struggle with them culminated with the demolition of the Būyid State in 1055.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. al-Bāqillānī's Earlier Life

Having set the political context of the Būyid period, we now turn to an examination of al-Bāqillānī's life. The latter was born in Basra around 941-942, just before the Būyids' capture of Baghdad in 945. He received his early education from the students of al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935), the prominent founder of the Sunnī theological school. Around 961, al-Bāqillānī moved to Baghdad and studied under important Sunnī scholars. After completing his study, he returned to Basra and started teaching at the Basra Mosque. Until this point, it could be said that his life and career had not been out of the ordinary. However, while teaching in Basra, al-Bāqillānī got an invitation from the Būyid Court for a scholarly discussion, which became a tipping point for his later life.<sup>7</sup>

Even though the Būyids were Shī'ī Imāmī sympathizers, they were tolerant of different religious groups. As the Būyid Amir, 'Adud al-Dawla liked to convene learned men for scholarly discussions and as such he invited Muslim jurists and theologians to his court. On one occasion, 'Adud al-Dawla asked his chief judge (*qādi al-quḍāt*), Bishr b. al-Husayn al-Mu'tazilī, why the Būyid Court lacked traditional Sunnī scholars (*ahl al-hadīth*). By teasing

6 Erdoğan Merçil, "Bahāüddöle", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslām Ansiklopedisi* (Ankara: TDV Yayınları, 1991), 4/475-476. See also Heribert Busse, "Iran under the Būyids", *The Cambridge History of Iran* ed. R. N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 4/250-304.

7 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq wa Taqrīb al-Masālik li-Ma'rifa Alam Madhhab Mālik*, ed. Sa'īd Ahmad A'rāb, 8 vols. (Maghrib: Wizāra al-Awqāf wa al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmiyya, 1982), 7/44.

Sunnī scholars, the chief judge responded that it was impossible to have rational and useful theological debates with Sunnī scholars because they were adherents of imitation (*taqlīd*) and narrative (*riwāyah*). He also explained that these scholars were so irrational that they would even persist in their contradictory and illogical statements. Nonetheless, since ‘Adud al-Dawla insisted on his idea, the judge referred to the names of Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Bākhilī and his student al-Bāqillānī.<sup>8</sup> The sultan then decided to invite both of them to his court in Shiraz. Shaykh al-Bākhilī refused the invitation because he believed that the Būyids were infidels (*kafarah*) and heretics (*fajarah*) who followed the sect of rawāfidh (a pejorative term generally used to describe Shī‘īs). He would not allow his student to participate in this sort of convention either. However, al-Bāqillānī was persistent in accepting the sultan’s invitation. After getting his shaykh’s permission, al-Bāqillānī traveled by sea from Basra to Shiraz, accompanied by the Sultan’s envoy.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, for al-Bāqillānī, this invitation would be an excellent opportunity to defend Sunnī beliefs in public and to set up a political network for his future career. Thus, he seemed to be eager to join the Būyid scholarly convocation.

After arriving at Shiraz, al-Bāqillānī thought about how he could be successful in this important debate since he had not had such experience before. Before proceeding with the debate, al-Bāqillānī became concerned about where to sit in the meeting hall because of its symbolic meaning. Refraining from sitting near the back, he decided to pick the right side just across from the chief judge on the left. During the meeting, al-Bāqillānī encountered Mu’tazilī scholars like Abu al-Hasan al-Ahdab and Abū Ishāk al-Nusaybīnī and debated theological matters with them such as free will and God’s visibility in heaven. Realizing his wit and convincing arguments, the Būyid Sultan appreciated al-Bāqillānī and treated him very well.<sup>10</sup> The latter enjoyed the Būyid patronage in Shiraz for a while and accompanied ‘Adud al-Dawla when he moved to Baghdad in 975.<sup>11</sup> The Būyid leader trusted and honored al-Bāqillānī to the extent that he charged him with his son’s (Samsām al-Dawla) education.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. al-Bāqillānī’s Scholarly Activities in Baghdad

In Baghdad, rather than isolating himself in the Būyid Court, al-Bāqillānī participated in different scholarly activities. For example, he taught *kalām* (Muslim theology) at al-Mansur

8 Ibn Hallikān noted that al-Bāqillānī was known for his prolixity in scholarly debates. One time, al-Bāqillānī discussed with Abū Sa‘īd al-Hārūnī, in a dull and longing fashion. Tired of his method of discussion, al-Hārūnī pointed out that if al-Bāqillānī repeated what he said precisely, he would not go further. Still, if al-Bāqillānī said something different, then he would respond to what al-Bāqillānī objected to. See Ibn Hallikān, *Wafayāt al-A’yān wa Abnāu Abna’ al-Zamān*, ed. Dr. Ihsān Abbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dāru Sādir, 1978), 4/269. This anecdote implies that al-Bāqillānī likely used a dialectical method in a banal and persistent fashion to be able to win the contest. Yet, his assertive and self-assured manner in scholarly debates brought fame and prestige to him.

9 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*, 7/51-56.

10 Ibid.

11 David Thomas, “al-Bāqillānī”, *Christian Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, Volume II* ed. David Thomas and Alexander Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 446.

12 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*, 7/57.



Mosque.<sup>13</sup> Teaching at such a prestigious center was a great opportunity for al-Bāqillānī, since mosques were important hubs for scholarly activities before madrasas became famous as educational centers in the Muslim world.<sup>14</sup> In his teaching activities, al-Bāqillānī worked on al-Ash'arī's famous theological work, *al-Luma'*. He considered this text so significant that he wrote a commentary (*sharh*) on it. When a famous Mu'tazilī scholar, Qādi Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025), composed a refutation against *al-Luma'* (*Nakd al-Luma'*), al-Bāqillānī wrote a counter-refutation (*Nakdu Nakd al-Luma'*) against his work, which indicates the extent to which al-Bāqillānī appreciated it.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to this, al-Bāqillānī created another important text in theology, *al-Tamhīd*, and dedicated it to 'Adud al-Dawla. In this text, he first talked about epistemological matters, and then examined other religions' belief systems such as Dualism, Christianity, and Judaism. After that, he moved to Islamic theological debates and engaged with non-Sunnī Ecoles like Mujassima and Mu'tazila. Lastly, criticizing the Shī'ī ideas of Imamate, al-Bāqillānī dealt with the Muslim community's supreme leadership and defended the legitimacy of the first four Muslim Caliphs against the Shī'ī polemics.<sup>16</sup>

To better understand why al-Bāqillānī engaged with theology rather than other scientific fields, it will be necessary to contextualize the scholarly world of medieval Baghdad. The systematic theology in Islam was generally associated with the emergence of the Mu'tazilī School in ninth-century Baghdad. The Mu'tazilī scholars enjoyed the Abbāsīd patronage until the death of the Abbāsīd Caliph, Vāsiq Billāh (d. 232/847). Thereafter, its power and popularity gradually waned.<sup>17</sup> However, it gained momentum again after the Būyids began to control Baghdad. For instance, the famous Būyid vizier, Sāhib ibn Abbād (d. 385/995), personally followed the Mu'tazilī School in theology and composed some theological works defending and disseminating Mu'tazilī ideas. He also became the patron of the Mu'tazilī scholars and gave them important positions in the Būyid state administration. By way of example, he became acquainted with the distinguished Mu'tazilī scholar, Abū Abd Allah al-Basrī (d. 369/980) and employed Qādi Abd al-Jabbār as the chief judge (*qādi al-quḍāt*) of the Būyid State in 977.<sup>18</sup>

13 As a part of the Abbāsīd Palace in the round city of Baghdad, al-Mansur Mosque was built in 763 by the Abbāsīd Caliph, Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr (d. 158/775). It had been known as a distinguished congregational mosque throughout Abbāsīd history. Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbāsīd Caliphate, from Contemporary Arabic and Persian Sources* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1900), 33-36.

14 George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 12-14.

15 *al-Luma'* is one of the important theological works of al-Ash'arī, in which he systematically defended Sunnī principles. In later times, *al-Luma'* became a canonical work among Ash'arī scholars, since they studied and wrote a commentary on it. See Muhammad Amīn al-Ismā'īlī, Introduction to al-Ash'arī's *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Radd alā Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bid'a* (Rabat: Kuliyā al-Adab wa al-Ulūm al-Insāniyya, 2013), 9-11.

16 al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb Tamhīd al-Awāil wa Talkhīs al-Dalā'il* ed. al-Shaykh Imād al-Dīn Ahmad Haydar (Beirut: Muassasa al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyya, 1987), 561-568.

17 Mājid Fakhrī, *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2000), 63-65.

18 Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Būyid Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 73-75, 178-179. See also Wilferd Madelung-Sabine Schmidtke, *al-Şāhib Ibn 'Abbād Promoter of Rational Theology: Two Mu'tazilī Kalām Texts from the Cairo Geniza* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1-4.



Like their Mu'tazilī counterparts, Shī'ī Imāmī scholars also enjoyed the Būyid patronage in this period. They freely produced new books and disseminated Shī'ī Imāmī ideas in Iraq. One of the significant Imāmī scholars of the Būyid age was Shaykh Mufīd (d. 413/1022), who systematized Imāmī doctrines with rationalist ideas and wrote many theological works and religious polemics to defend Shī'ī Imāmism. For example, he composed *al-Ifsāh fī al-Imāma* to prove Ali's Imamate against the Sunnī perception of the Caliphate.<sup>19</sup> The Būyid leader, 'Adud al-Dawla, favored him and attended his public conferences.<sup>20</sup> In 991 or 993, the Būyid vizier, Sabūr b. Ardashīr (d. 416/1025), who also had sympathy for the Imāmī School, founded an academy of learning (*Dār al-Ilm*), which included a massive library, on behalf of Shaykh al-Mufīd in the Karkh region in Baghdad.<sup>21</sup>

In such a context, it could be thought that al-Bāqillānī would have been so disturbed by the increasing influences of the Mu'tazilī and Shī'ī scholars in the Būyid State that he would have decided to produce theological works to defend the Sunnī creeds against them. However, instead of dissenting against the Būyid Dynasty because of its Shī'ī lineage, al-Bāqillānī followed a middle ground and tried to acquire the sympathy of the Būyids for Sunnism by creating theological texts.

#### 4. al-Bāqillānī's Diplomatic Mission to the Byzantine Court

In addition to having an active life in the scholarly world, al-Bāqillānī took part in a diplomatic mission as well. In 980, when a distinguished Byzantine commander and recent rebel, Bardas Skleros (d. 991) sought refuge in Baghdad, the Byzantines created diplomatic exchanges with the Būyids to capture him. After the Byzantine emissary visited the Būyid Court, 'Adud al-Dawla decided to send al-Bāqillānī as a Būyid envoy to Constantinople in return.<sup>22</sup>

19 See Shaykh al-Mufīd, *al-Ifsāh fī al-Imāma* (Qum: al-Matba'a Mihr, 1991).

20 Matthew Pierce, *Twelve Infallible Men: The Imams and the Making of Shī'ism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 30.

21 Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 55.

22 When the Byzantine Emperor, John Tzimiskes died in 976, the sons of the former emperor (Romanos II from the Macedonian Dynasty), Basil II (d. 1025), and Constantine VIII (d. 1028) came to be co-emperors. Yet, Basil II advanced to the throne. In the meantime, Bardas Skleros, who was the brother-in-law of John Tzimiskes and the domestikos (high military official) of the east, also put a claim on the Byzantine Throne. Trusting his military power, he launched a revolt against Basil II in the summer of 976. After controlling the whole of Asia Minor, he advanced to the west, and invaded Nicaea in 978, in which case Basil II appointed Bardas Phocas to surpass this threatening revolt. Bardas Phocas immediately headed to Caesarea (Bardas Skleros' stronghold) and met with Bardas Skleros' Army. Even though Bardas Skleros won the first round of the battle, he lost another round in Pankaleia not far from Amorium in 979. As his army was destroyed during the fight, Bardas Skleros had to seek refuge in the Muslim land in 980. Yet, Bardas Skleros and his three hundred men were not very welcome in Baghdad as they were put into jail by 'Adud al-Dawla. Subsequently, the Byzantine Emperor, Basil II, sent Nikephoros to 'Adud al-Dawla for negotiations. The envoy offered a significant sum of money and the release of Muslim captives in return for handing Bardas Skleros to the Byzantines. See George Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 298-299; Catherine Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire, 976-1025* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 243, 245. See also Marius Canard, "Les Relations Politiques et Sociales Entre Byzance et les Arabes", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XVIII, Washington D.C. (1964), 35-56; Marius Canard, "Deux Documents Arabes sur Bardas Skleros", *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*, 5 (1939),

Qādi Iyādh (d. 544/1149) explained that ‘Adud al-Dawla employed al-Bāqillānī for this mission because of his scholarly authority in proving Islam’s superiority over Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Even though Qādi Iyādh singled out a religious motivation for al-Bāqillānī’s diplomatic mission, other factors surely played a part in his selection because al-Bāqillānī was not only knowledgeable in religious sciences but he was also talented enough to acquire maximum political gains for the Būyids.

After accepting this diplomatic mission, al-Bāqillānī embarked on his journey to Constantinople in 981-982.<sup>24</sup> The first difficulty he experienced there had to do with Byzantine court ceremonies. Before meeting with the Byzantine emperor, al-Bāqillānī was asked to take off his turban and wear a light head covering called a *mandil*. In reply, al-Bāqillānī offered two options: either to enter in his regular clothes or to leave messages with the emperor’s envoy without having an actual meeting. When the emperor asked him why he had not obeyed the rule, he simply replied that God made them (Muslims) superior and dignified with Islam. Thus, to fulfill this request would have meant humiliation and derogation for him. He also stated that it was a tradition for a king not to humiliate an envoy but to respect him, especially if he was a scholar (*min ahl al-ilm*). After hearing al-Bāqillānī’s reasonable objection, the Byzantine emperor agreed to meet al-Bāqillānī without this requirement.<sup>25</sup>

A somewhat different story about al-Bāqillānī’s first experience in the Byzantine Court comes from the pen of al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071). According to his account, upon coming into the presence of the Byzantine emperor, envoys were supposed to kiss the ground before the emperor. During al-Bāqillānī’s visit, the emperor ordered his throne to be situated just behind a small gateway, thus requiring al-Bāqillānī to bend in order to walk through it. Contrary to the emperor’s plan, al-Bāqillānī followed a different strategy. Before passing through the gateway, he turned his back and bent. After entering the meeting hall, he turned around again and faced the emperor. Seeing al-Bāqillānī’s ingenuity, the emperor truly appreciated him.<sup>26</sup> The emperor also found his appearance very impressive as al-Bāqillānī wore a special

55–69; Yahyā b. Sa’īd al-Antāqī, *Tārīkh al-Antāqī*, ed. Omar Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Tripoli, Lebanon: Jurus Press, 1990), 188-189. For the reception of Bardas Skleros in the Būyid court, see al-Rudhrāwarī, *Eclipse of the Abbāsīd Caliphate*, ed. and trans. H. Amedroz and D. Margoliouth, 6 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1920–1), 6/116-117.

23 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*, 7/57-58.

24 al-Bāqillānī wrote a book titled *al-Masāil al-Qonstantiniyyah* (*the Questions of Constantinople*) about his experience in the Byzantine capital. Unfortunately, we do not have this work, but some parts of it were kept in Qādi Iyādh’s work, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*. Yusuf Ibish, “Life and Works of al-Bāqillānī”, *Islamic Studies* 4 (1965), 227; Abdel Hameed al-Amīn, *Byzantium and Islam (9th-10th Centuries), A Historical Evaluation of the Role of Religion in Byzantine-Muslim Relations*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Birmingham (2000), 281. For a general survey for al-Bāqillānī’s diplomatic mission to Constantinople, see Çağfer Karadaş, “Bizans Sarayında Müslüman-Hıristiyan Münazarası: Būveyhī Elçisi Bākīllānī ile İmparator II. Basileios Arasında Geçen Tartışma”, *İslām Araştırmaları Dergisi* 22 (2009), 1-35.

25 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*, 7/60-61.

26 al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīna al-Salām*, ed. Bashshār Awwād Ma’rūf, 17 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2001), 3/365-366.

garment with a turban for the convention.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, knowing the symbolic meaning of what to wear and how to act in a diplomatic meeting, al-Bāqillānī seemed to be very successful in dealing with the Byzantine court ceremonies during the first part of his mission.

The meeting of al-Bāqillānī with the Byzantine Emperor having ended peacefully, he was invited to a feast on a Sunday. It had been al-Bāqillānī's initial intention to reject this invitation because he assumed that there would be non-Islamic fare at the feast such as pork and wine. After he had been assured that everything in the entertainment would be compatible with Islamic principles, he accepted the invitation. Despite attending the feast, al-Bāqillānī did not eat anything but pretended to do so. Nonetheless, he explained that there had been nothing wrong with the food.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, al-Bāqillānī still seemed to feel uncomfortable and unsure whether or not he should attend a Christian feast. Even though he associated with non-Muslims at the feast, he thought that it was not appropriate for a Muslim scholar to taste their food.

Another challenging point for al-Bāqillānī during the convention was a theological argument with the Byzantines. The emperor first asked al-Bāqillānī about the authenticity of the Prophet Muhammad's miracle about dividing the moon. When al-Bāqillānī answered him with a compelling argument, the emperor became so confused that he decided to invite a priest to debate with him. Like the Byzantine Emperor, the Christian priest was also shocked by al-Bāqillānī's points so much so that he did not have the arguments to refute him.

After this, the Byzantine Emperor desired to have more theological debates with al-Bāqillānī because he found his scholarly capability during the debate fascinating. Thus, the emperor held another meeting in which he had a long debate with al-Bāqillānī about the nature of Jesus. In the next encounter, the emperor kept debating with him about the divinity of Jesus. When the emperor became incapable of making a counter-argument against al-Bāqillānī's persuasive stance, he decided to call the patriarch of Constantinople to debate with him at a feast.<sup>29</sup> Before the feast, the emperor warned the patriarch about al-Bāqillānī's wit and eloquence and asked him to be well-prepared to display the superiority of Christianity against Islam. However, the debate did not proceed as planned because an unusual event took place in the meeting. Once the patriarch got to the middle of the meeting room, the emperor and his men stood up, showing their respect, and then the emperor placed the patriarch next to himself. Afterwards, when the patriarch turned to al-Bāqillānī, he saluted the patriarch and asked about his wife and children. Frustrated by his question, all attendees felt uncomfortable. However, al-Bāqillānī sarcastically asked another question, challenging the patriarch to consider why he was beyond acquiring a family since they dared presume that God would have one. Shocked by his point, the patriarch found his ideas so dangerous for Christianity that he advised the emperor to send al-Bāqillānī back to his country as soon as possible for the welfare of Christians.<sup>30</sup>

27 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*, 7/61.

28 Ibid, 62-63.

29 The patriarch would be Nicholas II of Constantinople (Nicholas II of Chrysoberges). He was in office from 979 to 991. See Richard P. H. Greenfield-Alice-Mary Maffry Talbot, *Holy Men of Mount Athos* (Cambridge; Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 2016), 683.

30 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*, 7/67-68.

In addition to the accounts mentioned above, Ibn Asākir (d. 571/1176) mentions a further anecdote about al-Bāqillānī's scholarly experience in Constantinople. According to him, to scold al-Bāqillānī in public, the emperor asked him about the story of Aisha, the Prophet Muhammad's wife,<sup>31</sup> to which al-Bāqillānī responded that there were two women that people talked about, one of them being Aisha and the other Maryam bint Imran. Aisha did not have a child, whereas Maryam had one (referring to Jesus). However, he concluded that God purified and protected Maryam from those who slandered her.<sup>32</sup> Surprised by his point once again, the emperor immediately finished debating with him.<sup>33</sup> The Byzantine Emperor enjoyed having theological debates with al-Bāqillānī, but the latter seemed to be far more successful in those debates.

There is not enough information regarding how al-Bāqillānī's diplomatic mission had gone and how it was completed since the Muslim accounts mainly highlighted his scholarly encounters in Constantinople. Thus, we do not know whether or not his diplomatic efforts were successful. With his diplomatic mission in Constantinople completed, al-Bāqillānī returned to Baghdad. On his return journey, al-Bāqillānī carried a message from the emperor as well as certain precious gifts, Muslim war slaves, and some Qur'anic copies.<sup>34</sup> Ibn Qunus, a Byzantine envoy, also accompanied al-Bāqillānī on his journey to negotiate further with the Būyids.<sup>35</sup>

31 The emperor most probably referred to the story of Ifq that some people rumored about the misconduct of Aisha with a man while the Muslims returned to Medina from a military expedition. Yet, the Qur'anic verses (11-26:24) exonerated her from this kind of charge.

32 al-Bāqillānī tried to remind the Byzantine Emperor of how Maryam had a similar experience, bearing Jesus without a father, and being charged with misconduct but being exonerated by God. For al-Bāqillānī's views on Christianity and his refutation against the Christians, see David Thomas, *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 119-203; Wadi Zaidan Haddad, "A Tenth-Century Speculative Theologian's Refutation of the Basic Doctrines of Christianity: al-Bāqillānī (d. A.D. 1013)", *Muslim-Christian Encounters*, ed. Y. Y. Haddad-W. Z. Haddad (Gainesville; Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), 82-94.

33 Ibn Asākir, *Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī fī mā Nusiba ila al-Imām Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'arī*, ed. H. al-Qudsī (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 219.

34 Qādi Iyādh, *Tartīb al-Madāriq*, 7/68. It was a Byzantine custom to send some copies of the Qur'ān during the peace talks to show their friendship to the Muslim side. See al-Amin, *Byzantium and Islam (9th-10th Centuries)*, 288, footnote 97.

35 Afterward, Abū Ishāq b Shahrām as the next Būyid envoy accompanied Ibn Qunus on his return trip to Constantinople in 982. See al-Rudhrāwārī, *Eclipse of the Abbāsid Caliphate*, 23; H. F. Amedroz, "An Embassy from Baghdad to Emperor Basil II", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1914), 919. After lengthy negotiations, Ibn Shahrām came to a peace agreement with the Byzantines; the Būyids would hand Bardas Skleros to the Byzantines, whereas Basil II would concede the land taxes of essential regions such as Emesa and Aleppo to the Būyids. On Ibn Shahrām's return, Nicephorus, the Kanikleios (inkstand-keeper), accompanied him to bring precious gifts for the Sultan and to complete the deal with the Būyids. When Ibn Shahrām and Nicephorus arrived at Baghdad, 'Adud al-Dawla was seriously ill on his deathbed, and he died soon after. Instead, his son, Samsām al-Dawla, finally signed the peace agreement in 983. See al-Rudhrāwārī, *Eclipse of the Abbāsid Caliphate*, 23-35; H. F. Amedroz, "An Embassy from Baghdad to Emperor Basil II", 919-931.

## 5. al-Bāqillānī's Later Life in Baghdad

Back in Baghdad, al-Bāqillānī returned to his routine life which involved teaching and working on new books. At the same time, he became more concerned with Shī'ī activities. He felt particularly upset about the increasing popularity of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd in Baghdad as he educated many students in his house on Darb al-Riyāh in the Karkh region, which was densely populated by Shī'īs.<sup>36</sup> Since al-Bāqillānī also lived in this region, he likely observed what was taking place in the Shī'ī neighborhood.<sup>37</sup> al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī noted that when Shaykh al-Mufīd encountered al-Bāqillānī, he would turn to his friends and say that the devil was coming. Yet al-Bāqillānī would reply to him with a Qur'anic verse (We have sent the devils upon the disbelievers, inciting them to [evil] with [constant] incitement?)<sup>38</sup>, which positioned al-Mufīd in the level of disbelief.<sup>39</sup> We do not know whether or not this dialog actually happened, but it would imply that both scholars were so witty that they satirically criticized each other.

On a number of occasions al-Bāqillānī met with al-Mufīd to debate the subjects of the Imamate and legal theory.<sup>40</sup> Further, he wrote a book titled *al-Masā'il wa al-Mujālasāt al-Mansūra*, in which he talked about his criticisms of Shī'ism, the same criticisms that had been expressed during his debates with al-Mufīd. To rebuff the Shī'ī polemics against the Sunnī Muslim caliphs and companions of the prophet, al-Bāqillānī also composed *Manāḳib al-Aimma wa Nakd al-Matā'in an Salaf al-Ummah*.<sup>41</sup> With these works, al-Bāqillānī made systematic efforts to lay out the Sunnī understanding of the caliphate while trying to debunk the Shī'ī arguments.

In addition to encountering the endeavors of the Shī'ī Imāmī scholars, al-Bāqillānī was also exposed to Shī'ī public activities in Baghdad, since these activities became more visible in this period and caused tensions with the Sunnīs. For example, during the reign of Mu'izz al-Dawla (around 963), the Shī'ī groups started to celebrate the Ashūrā (commemorating Husayn's martyrdom in Karbala) publicly in Baghdad. The following year, they began to celebrate the feast of Ghadīr Khumm (the celebration of Ali's designation as the successor of the Prophet) on the eighteenth of Dhu al-Hijjah.<sup>42</sup>

The Sunnī population became so resentful of the Shī'ī commemorations of Karbala and Ghadīr Khumm that they created alternative ones. In 999, the Sunnī quarters on Bāb al-Basra in Baghdad, for example, started to celebrate the martyrdom of Mus'ab b. Zubayr (d. 72/691) on the eighteenth of Muharram and *Yawm al-Ghār* (the day of the cave) on the twenty-sixth of Dhu al-Hijjah, on which Abū Bakr (d. 13/634) hid with the prophet in a cave during the hijrah.<sup>43</sup>

36 Wilferd Madelung, "al-Mufīd", *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Second Edition) (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 7/312-313.

37 Qādi Iyādh, *Tarīb al-Madāriq*, 7/45.

38 19:83.

39 al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Madīna al-Salām*, 365.

40 Pierce, *Twelve Infallible Men*, 31. See also M. J. McDermott, "A Debate between al-Mufid and al-Baqqillani", *Recherches d'Islamologie*, Recueil d'articles offert à G. Anawati et L. Gardet par leurs collègues et amis (Louvain, 1977), 223-235.

41 Ibish, "Life and Works of al-Bāqillānī", 227.

42 Tilman Nagel, "Būyids", *Encyclopedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1990), 4/6, 578-586.

43 Pierce, *Twelve Infallible Men*, 31-32.

This rivalry between the Shī'īs and Sunnīs caused bitter struggles in Baghdad. As an example, in 1002, both sides tumultuously performed public ceremonies that instigated civil strife. First, the Shī'īs clashed with the Turkish soldiers and killed some of them, since the Turkish military faction allied with the Sunnī population. Then, helping the Turks, the Sunnīs started a counter-attack against the Shī'īs. The clash continued for several days. To stop the civil war, the Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Qādir, banned all religious commemorations and expelled Shaykh al-Mufīd from Baghdad for his alleged responsibility for the civil war.<sup>44</sup>

Another tension between the Sunnīs and Shī'īs took place in 1003, when the Būyīd leader, Bahā al-Dawla, wanted to appoint an important Shī'ī leader, Abū Ahmad al-Mūsawī (d. 397/1007),<sup>45</sup> as chief judge of Baghdad. The Sunnī leaders including the Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Qādir Billāh, strongly opposed it because of his Shī'ī background. Due to the strong Sunnī resistance, Bahā al-Dawla had to cancel this appointment.<sup>46</sup>

The final time that the Sunnīs and Shī'īs clashed with each other was in 1007. The struggle was caused by a rumor that the Shī'īs possessed the original Qur'anic copy of Abd Allah b. Mas'ūd (d. 32/652), a famous companion of the prophet, who was believed to have created his version of the Qur'ān, which was different from the existing one. Provoked by this rumor, the Sunnīs attacked the Shī'ī Burātha Mosque and assaulted Shaykh al-Mufīd. To investigate the rumor, the Abbāsīd Caliphate created a commission led by Abū Hamīd Isfarāīnī (d. 406/1016). The commission declared this Qur'anic copy to be apocryphal and burned it. In return, the Shī'īs attacked Sunnī neighborhoods and assaulted Sunnī important religious figures such as Abū Hamīd Isfarāīnī and Qādi Ibn al-Aqfānī (d. 404/1014). The Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Qādir Billāh, once again played an important role in stopping the civil war. Regarding al-Mufīd to be responsible for the civil war, the caliph sent him into exile again.<sup>47</sup> Even though al-Mufīd was banned from Baghdad twice in 1002 and 1007, during the factional clashes between the Sunnīs and Shī'īs, he managed to return after a while.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, al-Bāqillānī probably witnessed the increasing tensions between Sunnīs and Shī'īs that caused social and political turmoil in Baghdad. Even though al-Bāqillānī did not actively participate in the civil wars, he found alternative ways to engage with them. For example, he composed a book titled *al-Intisār li al-Qur'ān (In Defense of the Qur'ān)* or *al-Intisār li-Sihhati Naql al-Qur'ān wa al-Radd ala man Nahalat al-Fasād bi-Ziyāda aw Nuqsān*. In that book, he argued in detail how the majority of Shī'īs claimed that the knowledge of

44 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam*, ed. Muhammad Abd al-Qādir Atā-Mustafa Abd al-Qādir Atā, 19 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1995), 15/33; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. Muhammad Yusuf al-Daqaq, 11 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1987), 8/18.

45 Abū Ahmad al-Mūsawī was the father of distinguished Shī'ī Imāmī scholars, al-Sharīf al-Radī (d. 406/1015) and al-Sharīf al-Murtadā (d. 436/1044). al-Mūsawī was first appointed as the leader of Tālibids (the naqīb of the ashraf) in 965 by the Būyīd Sultan, Mu'izz al-Dawla. Then he was ousted from his position a couple of times, but he managed to acquire his job again and again. See Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty*, 288.

46 Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty*, 309.

47 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, 8/49-50.

48 Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, 68.



the true Qur'ān was only known by the Infallible Imams, and how they cast doubts on the existing Qur'ān that was re-composed and copied during the Caliph Othman (d. 35/656). Trying to debunk these claims, al-Bāqillānī laid down in which context the existing Qur'ān was composed. His main point was that even though Abd Allah ibn Mas'ūd had first opposed the Caliph Othman's efforts regarding the compilation of the Qur'ān, he later agreed with the caliph. With the consensus of all the prophet's companions, the Caliph Othmān ordered the destruction of different versions of the Qur'ān including Ibn Mas'ūd's one. Thus, al-Bāqillānī concluded that there was nothing wrong with the existing Qur'ān as claimed by the Shī'īs.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, although al-Bāqillānī was not an active participant of the Sunnī- Shī'ī conflicts, he was involved in them in a scholarly fashion and supported the Sunnī cause with his book *al-Intisar*.

## 6. al-Bāqillānī's Encounter with the Ismā'ilīs

In this period, al-Bāqillānī also had to deal with the other dominant Shī'ī group, the Ismā'ilīs, since the Fātimid Dynasty in Egypt intensified the Ismā'ilī *da'wa* program in the Middle East and acquired an essential ground in Iraq.<sup>50</sup> While protesting against the Sunnī authorities during the civil war in 1007, some Shī'īs expressed their sympathy for the Fātimid Caliph (al-Hākim) (d. 411/1021) calling him *mansūr* (victorious).<sup>51</sup> Resenting the unfair treatment of the Sunnī authorities against the Shī'ī population, al-Sharīf al-Radī, a famous Shī'ī scholar, composed a couple of verses expressing his favor for the Fātimid Caliph:

“Why should I bear humiliation in the land of the enemy when in Egypt the Caliph is an Alid. His father is my father, his friend (*mawlāhu*) is my friend (*mawlāy*), if the distant stranger bears malice for me. That which ties my neck to his neck, is the *sayyid* of all men, Muhammad and Ali.”<sup>52</sup>

In these verses, al-Sharīf al-Radī pointed out that his family and the Fātimids had a shared lineage. They both had a common enemy, referring to the Sunnī Abbāsīd Caliphate. His

49 al-Bāqillānī, *al-Intisār li'l-Qur'ān*, ed. Muhammad Isām al-Qudah (Amman: al-Fath Books, 2001), 57, 71-96, 300-330, 393.

50 The Fātimid *da'wa* project increased during the reign of al-Hākim, since he constructed *Dār al-Ilm* (House of Knowledge) in 1005, where many Ismā'ilī *dā'īs* got an education to serve in his project. al-Hākim personally cared about the training of the *dā'īs* and their mission in different parts of the Muslim world. The scholarly productions of the Ismā'ilī *da'wa* program also proliferated in this period. These books mainly dealt with the Imamate of the Fātimids. For example, Ahmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Naysābūrī, a crucial *dā'ī* figure during the reigns of al-Azīz and al-Hākim, composed a book titled *Ithbāt al-Imāma*. In 1015, Hamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī, known as *hujjat al-Irāqayn* (the chief *dā'ī* of two Iraqs) [Iraq-i Arab and Iraq-i Ajam], also created a book, *al-Masābih fī Ithbāt al-Imāma* (*Lights to Illuminate the Proof of the Imāmate*). With that book, he tried to convince the Būyid vizier, Fakhr al-Mulk (d. 1016), to support the Fātimid Dynasty by arguing that the Abbāsīd Caliph (al-Qādir) was not qualified enough for the Imāmate. See Shainool Jiwa, “The Baghdad Manifesto (402 AH / 1011 CE): A Re-examination of Fātimid-Abbāsīd Rivalry”, *The Institute of Ismaili Studies*, 11 (edited version of the article was published in *The Fātimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions*, ed. Farhad Daftary-Shainool Jiwa (London: I.B. Taurus, 2017), 12-13).

51 Tamima Bayhom-Daou, *Shaykh Muḥīd* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 26.

52 Jiwa, “The Baghdad Manifesto (402 AH / 1011 CE)”, 22-79.



verses became well-known and well-circulated in Baghdad. These verses were so disturbing to al-Qādir Billāh that he initiated a diplomatic effort and sent al-Bāqillānī as an envoy to al-Sharīf al-Radī's father, Abū Ahmad al-Mūsawī, to deal with the anti-Abbāsīd tone in his poem. During the meeting, al-Mūsawī assured al-Bāqillānī of his son's apology and regret for the verses. When al-Bāqillānī carried al-Mūsawī's message to the Caliph, he found it quite satisfactory.<sup>53</sup> The successful completion of this mission shows that al-Bāqillānī once again played an important role in inter-communal relations and eased the tensions between the Sunnī and Shī'ī factions.

As the Abbāsīd-Fātimīd rivalry among the elite circle of Iraq intensified, al-Bāqillānī continued his diplomatic roles. In 1010, the rulers of Madāin, Anbar, and Kufa, for instance, made allegiances to the Fātimīd Caliph. Notably, the governor of Mosul, Qarwash b. al-Muqallad (Uqaylid ruler) (d.1050), became a Fātimīd sympathizer and named the Fātimīd Caliph (al-Hākīm) during Friday sermons. Around 1010-1011, the Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Qādir Billāh, sent al-Bāqillānī to the Būyīd Amir, Bahā al-Dawla, requesting him to prevent the Fātimīd ideological activities on Abbāsīd territory.<sup>54</sup> Bahā al-Dawla took necessary steps and sent Iraq's commander in chief to the governor of Mosul. Threatened by this army, Qarwash switched his allegiance to Baghdad and once again named the Abbāsīd Caliph during Friday sermons.<sup>55</sup> Thanks to al-Bāqillānī's successful diplomatic effort, the Abbāsīd Caliph kept his authority over Iraq.

However, al-Bāqillānī was absent in one crucial event in the Fātimīd-Abbāsīd rivalry. As a further step against the Fātimīds' authority, in 1011, al-Qādir Billāh decided to create a commission to discuss whether or not the Fātimīd Dynasty had an original lineage going back to Ali. The commission included not only the Sunnī scholars and notables but also the Shī'ī Imāmī scholars and dignitaries such as Shaykh al-Mufīd, al-Sharīf al-Radī, and his brother (al-Sharīf al-Murtadā). After holding a meeting, the mixed commission signed a document known as *mahdar* declaring the illegitimacy of the Alid lineage of the Fātimīd Dynasty.<sup>56</sup> This document, of course, provided legitimacy to the Abbāsīd Caliph against the Fātimīds and helped him to consolidate his authority over Iraq.

Even though al-Bāqillānī was one of the authoritative Sunnī scholars, why was his name not among those who signed the document? Shainool Jiwa argues that al-Bāqillānī's efforts

53 Ibid, 11-12.

54 Ibn al-Imād, *Shazarāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār man Dhahab*, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Masīrah, 1979), 3/160. See also Paul E. Walker, "The Ismaili Da'wa in the Reign of the Fātimīd Caliph al-Hākīm", *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 30 (1993), 161-182.

55 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 15/76-77.

56 Jiwa, "The Baghdad Manifesto (402 AH / 1011 CE)", 4, 15-16; Donohue, *The Buwayhid Dynasty*, 285. By way of spreading his authority further, al-Qādir Billāh forced non-Sunnī scholars to sign a document in 1018, declaring that they were going to give up their 'unorthodox activities,' and follow Sunnī Islam. In 1029, he also held a specific dīwān and then created a manifesto that denounced those whose ideas were not compatible with Sunnī Islam, while encouraging people to follow the Sunnī principles. See Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam*, 15/125, 197-198.

against the Ismā'īlī *da'wa* project had been well-known: "...therefore his signature on the Manifesto was perhaps deemed as superfluous."<sup>57</sup> Signing the document would have meant a clear sympathy and favor for the Sunnī Caliph, which would have contradicted his neutral position. Therefore, al-Bāqillānī would not have wanted to have been a part of the committee. Nonetheless, he aimed to struggle with the Ismā'īlīs intellectually as he had done before against the Imāmī Shī'īs. For example, he composed an epistle titled *Nusrat al-Abbās wa Imāmāt Banīh -- In Support of al-Abbas and the Imamate of his Offspring--* (also known as *Imāmāt Banī Abbās*).<sup>58</sup> In this work, al-Bāqillānī favored the legitimacy of the Abbāsī Dynasty for the Muslim community's supreme leadership. To deal with the Ismā'īlī movement, al-Bāqillānī also composed *Kashf al-Asrār fī al-Radd ala al-Bāṭiniyyah --The Revealing of Secrets in the Refutation of al-Bāṭiniyyah--*. In the text, al-Bāqillānī claimed that the Ismā'īlīs seemed to be a part of the Muslim community but dissimulated their blasphemy; thus, they had no link with Ali (*Ahl al-Bayt*).<sup>59</sup>

The scholarly efforts undertaken by al-Bāqillānī on the justification of the Sunnī Abbāsī Caliphate were not limited to these two books, since he penned other works such as *al-Imāmāt al-Kabīrah (the Supreme Leadership)* and *al-Imāmāt al-Saghīrah (the Minor Leadership)*.<sup>60</sup> With all these books, al-Bāqillānī seemed to deal with the Ismā'īlī activities on an intellectual level. He tried to debunk the Fātimids' claims for the Muslim leadership while favoring the legitimacy of the Sunnī Abbāsī Dynasty.

## Conclusion

The Muslim world witnessed radical transformations in the tenth century. While the Sunnī Abbāsī Caliphate lost its political authority and power, new local dynasties took its place. Among those dynasties, the Būyids became the dominant power and began to control Iraq after the mid-tenth century. Despite their Shī'ī sympathy, the Būyids were tolerant of different religious groups (the Mu'tazilīs and the Sunnīs), since they provided patronage for these groups and accommodated them at the Būyid Court. As a Sunnī Muslim scholar, al-Bāqillānī's life perfectly exemplifies different layers of the Būyid religious world, since he worked for the Būyid State and played important diplomatic roles in the Sunnī-Shī'ī struggles in Baghdad. Under the Būyid patronage, he also composed books defending Sunnī theology and the Abbāsī Caliphate against the Imāmī Shī'īs and Ismā'īlīs. Besides, as a Būyid envoy, he encountered the Byzantines and tried to prove Islam's superiority over Christianity in Constantinople. As

57 Jiwa, "The Baghdad Manifesto (402 AH / 1011 CE)", 18.

58 Ibish, "Life and Works of al-Bāqillānī", 227.

59 Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Maktaba al-Ma'ārif, 1991), 11/346. Eva-Maria Lika explains that al-Bāqillānī created *Kashf al-Asrār* to deal with *Kitāb al-Balah (al-Balagh al-Akbar wa al-Nāmūs al-A'zam)* which was allegedly written by the Ismā'īlī group. See Eva-Maria Lika, *Proofs of Prophecy and the Refutation of the Ismā'īliyya: The Kitāb Ithbāt Nubuwwāt al-Nabī by the Zaydī al-Mu'ayyad Bī-Ilāh al-Hārūnī (D. 411/1020)* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 60-61.

60 Ibish, "Life and Works of al-Bāqillānī", 226-227.

a result, his life and works indicate that instead of sectarianism and religious oppression, the Būyid world provided porous and flexible religious boundaries.

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